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PORTLAND AND THE BREAKWATER.

NOTWITHSTANDING the proverbial gloom of November, the sun shone as brightly as though nature did not believe the almanac, when, a few days since, we found ourselves on board a Weymouth steamer, bound for Portland. The voyage, it is true, was expected to occupy only half an hour; still, it was a very pleasant thing to have fair weather.

The Bay of Weymouth looked extremely picturesque on that occasion. The long line of white cliffs, with their broken headlands, seemed almost to landlock the bay. It chanced, fortunately, that the incident of light and colouring was peculiarly beautiful and varied. The sky was, in truth, heavenly azure, diversified with soft white clouds, changing every moment under the influence of the plastic wind, which dallied with the sky drapery till its fashion was all beautiful. The blue sea was covered with a tracery of dancing gold spangles, and the white-crested waves rode cheerily into the shore, giving life and animation to the whole scene.

As we receded from the shore, the different objects of interest in the neighbourhood of Weymouth were pointed out to us. The moors, treeless, but green and undulating, have here and there oases of luxuriant verdure; and under shelter of the hillside, villages nestle themselves, as at Preston and Osmington, with a picturesque church for warden of the happy valley. It was very interesting to watch the cloud-shadows, chasing each other over the wide expanse of down; now throwing the cliffs into dark and bold relief against the bright sky, and now revealing in intensest sunlight every detail of broken rock and shelving shore, every hue of colour, every change of sand and shingle, and far-stretching sunken ledges. It was more like a good water-colour drawing than almost anything English we had ever looked upon.

Ringstead and Lullworth, we were told, are places of interest. St Albans Head was the extreme point discernible. We soon rounded that part of the mainland which unfortunately shuts out the view of Portland from the town of Weymouth, and now we found ourselves in sight of the island, which rises rather grandly from the water. Many persons have compared it to Gibraltar; and as it appeared on this occasion, its height was exaggerated by a lingering mist which veiled its summit.

The island has naturally a very warlike look; and now a substantial fort, in course of erection, is cresting the near extremity—a commanding position, and one of great importance in guarding the roadstead.

One of the most remarkable features connected with

Portland is the 'Chesil Bank,' which in reality unites it with the mainland; so that the *isle* of Portland is in fact a peninsula. Still, we cannot help holding by its common designation. The bank we have just mentioned is a mound of shingle, about two hundred yards in width, and more than ten miles in length; nearly, but not quite touching the nearest point of the opposite shore, and then 'running up in the form of a narrow isthmus along the western seaboard of Dorsetshire.' This singular formation, which is about forty feet above highwater-mark, acts as a natural breakwater to the anchorage of Portland Roads, sheltering the east bay against westerly gales.

'The shingle of the Chesil Bank,' says Mr Cooke, in his admirable paper read before the Institution of Civil Engineers in May 1853, 'is composed chiefly of chalk-flints, with a small proportion of pebbles from the red sandstone. . . . A peculiar kind of jasper with flesh-coloured red predominating, is not very uncommon. . . . There are also occasionally pebbles which are decidedly porphyritic. . . . As a proof of the solidity of the mass, it may here be noticed that the water never percolates from the west bay into the east bay, except in the heaviest gales from the south-west—notwithstanding that ordinary tides in moderate weather rise to two or three inches higher, and fall out two feet nine inches lower on the west side than the east.'

The questions which arise respecting this formation are highly interesting, and are closely followed out in the paper from which we quote. When we come to examine the materials which compose the accumulated mass, we are led by geologists to trace back their origin to strata which would naturally afford this *débris*; and, according to the shewing of Mr Cooke, such strata are not to be found save on the *west* coast, as far down as Lyme-Regis. Accepting this fact, we are led to reason on the movements and deposition of shingle, and to balance probabilities between the effect of tidal currents or wind-waves upon these travelling masses.

The theory that the *wind-waves* are the primary cause of the transit of *débris* from distant strata, is ably supported by Mr Cooke. He multiplies instances of shingle borne by the heaviest seas in opposition to the prevailing current of the tide. The form of the bank varies considerably under the influence of severe gales of wind; the concussion of the receding meeting the on-coming wave is sometimes so great, 'that an enormous body of broken water and spray will sometimes rise perpendicularly into the air to a height of sixty or seventy feet.'

There is a curious anecdote connected with the force of winds and waves, which may not be known to all

our readers. On the 23d of November 1824, a ship of 100 tons burden, having on board stores and heavy guns, 'being unable to weather Portland, as a last resource, was run directly on to the Chesil Bank under canvas. She happened to come in on the top of a sea, and by her momentum was carried on to the crest of the bank, where she remained for some time, and was ultimately launched into the eastern bay.'

We found an hour had already flown in listening to local traditions, and in examining this curious shingle-beach, which so happily forms a natural breakwater just in the right place. We could not, however, leave the place without noticing the local boats, called 'lerrets,' which are used by the fishermen of this district. They are quite peculiar, and 'are propelled by the rowers on one side pulling stroke alternately with those on the other, thus giving the boat a tortuous motion through the water.' The fishermen consider this method economies power. Certain it is, they are a hardy race, and manage their barks most skillfully.

Till lately, the Portlanders have been an isolated people, preserving many old-world customs, and never marrying out of the island; but their primitive habits and manners have been invaded by the march of physical science and the mechanical arts, which sometimes drive in civilisation with a sledge-hammer, where the soil will not take kindly to the seed.

Apropos of engineering triumphs, we now bend our steps to the breakwater, which is being constructed at Portland, and is the great object of attraction. Leaving the Chesil Bank to the right, the visitor proceeds along the shore for some quarter of a mile, through a 'Pelion upon Ossa' of stone, iron, and miscellaneous materials, when arriving at the lodge, his name is required, and he is then free to see the works.

At present, the whole place is encumbered by a vast wooden staging, over which railway lines intersect each other; together with the tools and appliances required by engineers, masons, smiths, carpenters, divers, and others. Horses tramp along the wooden causeway, steam-engines hiss and roar, iron chains clank, and wheels revolve with ceaseless noise.

At first, it is difficult to realise what all this is about, but curiosity soon leads you onward where the tide of business seems tending.

Here it may be well to say a few words about the history of the breakwater. About 1794 it occurred to Mr Hervey of Weymouth, who was evidently a very intelligent and far-sighted individual, that it would be highly desirable to have a breakwater for the purpose of sheltering the Portland Roads. It was a fixed idea in his mind, and he appears to have pursued the subject with an earnestness worthy of the cause. He memorialised and petitioned all to no use, and died, leaving his suggestion a legacy to parliament, who very wisely came to the conclusion, some ten years ago, that this coast required a harbour, and that the tremendous works of a similar kind at Cherbourg were a significant hint. The breakwater was accordingly commenced in 1847; but the ceremony of laying the foundation-stone did not take place till the 25th of July 1849, when that duty was performed by the prince-consort.

The breakwater is designed to be 2500 yards in length, and will shelter 2107 acres of Portland Bay—1760 acres of which will have from two to ten fathoms at low-water spring-tides, having excellent anchorage in a strong blue clay, with other advantages of good water, and an almost inexhaustible supply of ballast.

It appears that a great many vessels have been lost, and lives sacrificed on this coast, owing to the want of a harbour of refuge—for none such exists between Plymouth and Spithead, a distance of 140 miles.

There are peculiar facilities in the locality for the construction of this great work. The quarries of

Portland afford a ready supply of material. There were millions of tons of refuse stone already quarried, and available for the foundation of the breakwater, which, together with the blocks of stone required for the superstructure, might be easily conveyed to the works.

We should here remind our readers that government has a prison establishment at Portland, where some 1500 convicts are kept employed, principally in the quarries which supply the material for this great undertaking.

The stone is being worked at about 300 feet above the level of the sea, and is conveyed by convict and horse labour to a railway which has been constructed for its transit. This line consists of three inclines, which fall one foot in ten. 'The loaded trucks are let down by wire-rope attached to drums, and in their descent draw up the empty trucks on a parallel line of railway; the speed is regulated by very powerful screw-breaks.' A self-registering machine weighs each load. The official report of the year ending the 31st of March 1857, from which we quote our statistics of the breakwater, informs us that 2,667,907 tons of rough stone have been deposited since the commencement of the works—this will give us some idea of their magnitude. The proximity of these quarries has considerably lessened the expense in the construction of the breakwater. Cherbourg cost the French government upwards of two millions—five millions have been expended altogether on that *porte*. And our own Plymouth Breakwater, though only 1760 yards in length, cost nearly if not quite two millions; whereas the original estimate made in 1846 for the Portland Breakwater was between five and six hundred thousand pounds. (This, however, did not include any masonry except that in the 'heads.') It has since been deemed expedient to extend the structure, and also to make it applicable for coaling and watering establishments, suitable for the largest ships of the navy; these additions, together with other enlargements upon the original plan, have brought the net estimated expenditure to L.844,125.

The scaffolding, or, more properly, staging, reaches at present about two-thirds of the projected extent of the breakwater: on this we walked. About a quarter of a mile from shore it is intended there should be an opening large enough to admit vessels into the harbour. The pier-heads at this point are nearly finished, and present a most resistant appearance. They are, for the most part, built of a peculiar kind of stone found in Portland, and called 'Roach' by the quarrymen; the outside or face of the heads being of large masses of granite from Cornwall. These piers seem planted immutably firm in the restless element which leaps vainly against this rampart of mechanical skill.

The tide was down, so we had an opportunity of seeing the footing or foundation, which is composed of rude pieces of rock, intermixed with rubble. For some distance, this is already covered with sea-weed, so that it has much the appearance of a natural ledge of rock; but as you proceed, you soon discover the hand of man. You see that the pieces have been recently flung there, and there is evidence of form growing out of chaos. We remarked a singularly fine specimen of an ammonite amongst the debris, nearly the circumference of a cart-wheel, and beautifully perfect. We looked with longing eyes, and wished it in our provincial museum; and this, though the finest fossil we saw, was by no means solitary, for scraps of the ammonite family lay in various directions.

The timber-staging, we should observe, is about 130 feet in width. There are five lines of railway on it, and a railed way for workmen and visitors. This mass of timber-work is supported at intervals by enormous wooden piles, which, as we were told, are constructed in the following manner. The piles end

in a disc of metal, in a spiral form, which enters the ground on the principle of the screw, and when it has entered a clay or sandy bottom, resists alike upward or downward pressure.

We appeared to be about thirty or forty feet above the then level of the tide; the sea was intensely green. There is something singularly beautiful in that peculiar colour—rightly called 'sea-green:' as we looked down, it was like a mass of emerald quartz, so bright, clear, and crystalline. There is always a fascination in gazing upon the mysterious sea, and its restless motions and throbbing tide-pulses. It would be difficult to say what pantheistic dreams we might not have indulged in, in our human sympathy for the ocean, had we not been startled out of all sentimentality by the thundering approach of a train, which made the whole place tremble, and ourselves likewise, so near it seemed to be upon our heels. We had no intention of disputing the order of precedence, so drew aside while the heavily laden trucks, and lastly, the engine, passed us by.

We saw other trains advancing in rapid succession, and we followed to the scene of action. We shortly arrived at the extreme point which the staging has yet attained, nearly a mile out to sea. The lines of railway are occupied with the passage of trains which arrive every few minutes; each engine propels five trucks, which are severally loaded with about ten tons of stone. The space is left open between the rails, so that when the truck has come to the right point, the man in charge has only to touch a lever at the bottom, and the whole load is immediately let fall into the water.

But the effect is not to be described in these few words of bald description, and simple statement of the mechanical arrangements. It was a sight not soon to be forgotten. Imagine yourself standing on what was apparently, though not really, a frail and slender framework, which shook violently beneath the heavy roll of the engines and their trains, as they came up to discharge each its cargo of fifty tons of stone, which falls with the roar and dash of an avalanche into the seething, surging flood beneath. The breaking crash of stones is soon lost in the sullen reverberating plunge, and in an instant the rocks are swallowed by the whelming waters, which fling back in triumph a cloud of feathered spray; then the boiling tide subsides into rippling quietude, till again lashed into fury by another cataract of stones. And so goes on this battle between art and nature; the capacity of the sea at first appears inexhaustible, but at length man is rewarded by seeing the ledge of rock growing beneath his patient assiduity.

The average breadth of this foundation is 260 feet; but the breadth of the breakwater at the top—ten feet above highwater-mark—will be 23 feet 6 inches. About 400 workmen are employed on the breakwater and on the works generally, besides 800 to 1000 convicts who are entirely occupied at the quarries.

If the same rate of progress continues to be observed, the breakwater will probably be completed in three or four years from the present time.

As we retraced our steps, we stopped frequently to admire the wonderful appliances which mechanical science has brought to bear upon all engineering difficulties. Thanks to the great politeness of Mr Coope, the head engineer, we were allowed to see the model of the breakwater, and also to examine a very interesting piece of apparatus, of his own construction, a self-registering tide-gauge, which indicates every wave that breaks upon the shore.

In the premises of the office is a remarkably fine specimen of a fossil tree, some thirty feet in length, the sight of which made us determine to lose no time in examining some of those interesting remains of a former world *in situ*; accordingly, we procured a carriage to take us to the top of the island.

We returned nearly to the spot where we first landed, then passing behind Portland Castle, we found ourselves in the town of Chesil. Never was there such a quaint old place; it looked the more venerable perhaps from the fact of its being built entirely of stone—in some cases, even the roofing was of stone: this tended to give it a gray and uniform appearance; added to which, there was not a tree or shrub to be seen. The town runs some way up the hill, on either side of a street as steep almost as a roof. At one angle of the road, you look down the chimneys of houses whose door-steps you had been level with a few minutes before. Climbing laboriously up the hill, the view opens before you; and now, for the first time, you see the whole long line of the Chesil beach; the western bay lies at your feet, stretching far towards Devonshire. The prospect at this point is highly picturesque—the precipitous road, with its continental-looking old town, and to the left, broken and rugged cliffs, ending abruptly in the sea.

On gaining the summit, the first thing that struck us was the stone-carts, which are rude and primitive, and the wheels of solid wood, enormously thick. We easily found a guide to the stone-quarries, which, it should be observed, are not those used by government, which are not shewn except by an order from the secretary of state.

We found the quarries in full work. It seems that the Portland stone was first brought into repute in the time of James I. It was employed in the erection of the banqueting-house at Whitehall; St Paul's Cathedral, Blackfriars and Westminster Bridges, and the New Royal Exchange, are also built of this stone. 'The annual quantity now shipped is between 30,000 to 40,000 tons.'

Dr Buckland, Sir Henry de la Beche, and others, have made observations upon the geology of Portland. It appears that the 'dirt-bed,' as the workmen call it, is the depository of the fossilised trees. This stratum rests upon the ('good') Portland stone, which, again, has beneath it, according to Buckland, 'compact, chalky limestone with chert,' and 'sandy limestone with chert,' also 'rubbly beds with chert.' 'The latter description,' says Mr Coope, 'is the most exact;' and he adds: 'The character of this chert or flinty matter, which contains vast quantities of shells, and chiefly of the *Trigonia*, is entirely different from the chalk-flints.'

The dirt-bed, we were told, is about thirty feet in thickness, and in it are found the fossil trees of the *cycadeoides* in great numbers. 'They are partly sunk in black earth,' says Mr Webster, 'and partly covered by superjacent calcareo-silicious slate; from this slate, the silica to which the trees are now converted must have been derived.' Some observations of the late Andrew Crosse are pertinent to this matter; he says, in a paper on *Change*: 'The island of Portland is full of fossil trees—trees whose body is converted into silica and chalcedony. This is the work of ages, and the probable cause electric transfer, by which the silica quits the soil, and is drawn up through the pores of wood.' Sir Roderick Murchison, in his *Silurian System*, thus describes the cycade as 'a beautiful class of plants between the palms and conifers, having a tall straight trunk, terminating in a magnificent crown of foliage.' And Mrs Somerville, in her *Physical Geography*, remarking on the great changes which the earth has undergone, observes of the colitic series: 'Plants allied to the zamias and cycades of our tropical regions, many ferns and pines of the genus *araucaria*, characterised its vegetation; and the upright stems of a fossil tree at Portland shew that it had been covered with trees.' Covered with trees and plants, now exclusively the productions of tropical climes—we repeat these words with awe: what thoughts rush upon the mind as we contemplate this single fact! Now, on this sterile rock, a few stunted trees and shrubs

hardly find means of existence. In that mysterious past, waving and luxuriant foliage decked the scene with rare forms of beauty. In Sir H. de la Beche's *Geological Researches*, he traces the probable history of the portion of England of which this is a part. We have not time here to linger with the geologists in their descriptions of how, in the lapse of time, after its primal glory, the dirt-bed became an estuary of the sea, or brackish lake, where the mud, possibly, of some vast river deposited its remains of terrestrial and freshwater creatures, and subsequent deeper depression of the area gave opportunity for the deposition of marine fossils. So go on these marvellous alternations of level; step by step, we may, and do learn to decipher more and more of the wonders of the pre-Adamite world. Such reflections read as a good moral to the plaudits of this self-glorifying age. When we build leviathan ships, throw chains which bind continents together, and pulsate with human thoughts; when we stay the ocean with a boundary, and turn the most subtle forces of nature to our bidding—let us not forget the unnumbered ages of change which this finite globe has seen; and beyond all, remember the metaphysical questions which regard time and space themselves but as conditional truth.

MY COUNTRY-HOUSE AND ITS TENANTS.

I AM the proprietor of Wythrop Place, Wythrop, Hampshire: the 'Place' being of course not any long row of ghastly plaster-of-Paris-pillared edifices built by three men and a boy in a fortnight, as one reads of in the rule of three, but a respectable mansion in the country; and I only point this out because I once received an answer to an advertisement addressed to me at 14 Wythrop Place, a mistake which I do not wish should occur again.

Living at the Place myself, for any length of time, is, however, out of the question, since I possess a brewery more than ten miles away from it, which requires my constant supervision, and my object, therefore, of course is, to get somebody else to live there. I find no great difficulty in the matter, so far as obtaining tenants; but where I fail is in convincing them that they ought to pay me rent for it. One would really imagine, to judge from their demands upon me, and their repudiation of my demand upon them, that the obligation lay upon the other side. There is a story afloat of a great theatrical manager—that is to say, of the manager of a great theatre—in connection with his treatment of dramatic authors, which strikes me as affording an excellent parallel to the case of myself and my tenants. The author arrives by appointment at the manager's place of business. His five-act tragedy has been accepted; his only doubt is whether he shall ask for it three hundred guineas, or four. 'Your piece, sir,' the great man admits, 'is fine; the situations are striking; the bad characters are sufficiently bloody, the good ones spotless as can be desired; and the general sentiments are in accordance with public opinion. Therefore, all I have to say to you is: *What will you give me to play it?*' Similarly, it would by no means surprise me should a person of easy manners and gentlemanly address call upon me any day, and, after allowing that Wythrop Place was elegantly furnished, commodiously arranged, and fit, in every respect, to accommodate himself and family, should finish his eulogium with: 'And now, sir, what will you give me to live in it?' I have had to do with numbers of candidates for my country-house who certainly entertained that view, if they did not express it, of the relation of landlord to tenant; people, who, having resided in fashionable furnished apartments in town during the season, languidly turn over the autumn leaves of the *Times* advertisement-sheet until

they find a house in the country to suit their tastes as to locality and convenience. Rent cannot be said to be a secondary object with these gentry—who are generally 'well connected,' and what the estate-agent calls 'desirable'—for it is not an object at all. They are the last persons to haggle, bless you, about a paltry thirty guineas, more or less, for the three months; the question as to whether the stable manure shall be regularly fetched as usual by Farmer Stubble, or not, is of no sort of consequence to them; they beg I will not apologise for the rather worn appearance of the drugget on the back staircase; as to the entrance-gate being indifferently hung, so that it sometimes has to be lifted before one can open it, they would not care three farthings should there be no entrance-gate at all. Why should I say three farthings, since money, much or little, seems never to enter into their thoughts. They are come down into the country to retrench, and all their modesty requires is a roomy furnished house in a pleasant neighbourhood, with a little park-land about it, and the use of a kitchen-garden—gratis.

It is very easy for the reader to say: 'This is nonsense; a man can't be expected to keep up a country-house for the gratuitous entertainment of strangers,' when he is expected to do it, as I am, year after year: or to ask me why I don't make them pay, when I can't make them. Goodness knows that I have been too shamefully treated by this class of persons, to have any delicacy about employing the very cruelest means to exact my dues. May I have another country-house upon my hands, if I would not have used torture, had the constitution permitted it, upon more than one of these wretches; but there is no redress to be got anyhow. Often and often, I have set the machinery of the law in motion against them; and we all know how much it costs to start that ingenious contrivance, and how exceedingly difficult the fly-wheel of it is to stop; but nothing ever came of it, except an attorney's bill. My tenants have generally taken their departure to the continent about a week before their term is up; they write from the south of France or Northern Italy, to mention casually that their rent must 'stand over' (over what, I never could make out; certainly not over me) for a little; but to insist particularly upon some work-bag of Berlin wool, or carved wooden paper-cutter—which they have inadvertently left behind in the right-hand drawer of the table in the back drawing-room—being forwarded to them at once with the greatest precautions against its being lost. They are anxious enough about their own trumpery property, and speak of it in terms which would lead you to imagine that it was a hostage, if necessary, many degrees above the value of their debt. One very gentlemanly tenant of this kind wrote to me from a fashionable watering-place, where he intended to reside for the winter months, to say that he had been much pleased with Wythrop, and would make a point of recommending it to his friends. That individual I did manage to lay hold of. I would have spent my entire patrimony rather than that man should have been suffered to escape my vengeance. I would have violated any law, foreign or British, and had him kidnapped, wheresoever he had betaken himself, and securely handed over to other of my myrmidons as soon as he touched English soil, before he should have gone unpunished. After expending about twice the money that was owed me, I lodged this scoffing wretch, I say, in the county jail. Very likely you may have heard of it; the provincial radical newspaper had a critique upon the matter next week, headed: 'Wythrop Place and its Owner;' wherein it was first shewn that all aristocrats were blood-thirsty and heartless; and, secondly, that I was not an aristocrat by any means; concluding with some disparaging and excursive remarks upon my beer. Moreover, since I had sued

my enemy for rent for the weeks which he had passed in my house, and not for the quarter only, I subjected myself to an action for false imprisonment, and was glad to pay fifty pounds to be out of it.

As for putting in an execution or seizing for it, what is the use of that with such tenants as mine. I only cut my own throat; execute myself and seize upon my private property, with the exception of such prizes as the work-bags and the paper-cutters. All the wealth of this sort of tenant seems to consist in wearing-apparel, of which they have large quantities, but which it is not legal to make prey of; at all events, I seldom get anything. I never made more than one capture with even a tolerable success, and that one was upon the chattels of Tilly Ricketts, subsequently described in the Insolvent Court as being of no profession, and no certain dwelling-place. His baptismal name was Chantilly, but I called him Tilly for short, and because I got to be tolerably intimate with him. He was a bachelor and a sporting person, having, indeed, been unfortunately attracted to the Place by its convenience for hunting purposes; and made nothing of riding ten miles to dine with us at the brewery and returning in the evening. He would arrange in a playful manner, over the dessert, to have a cask or two of strong beer sent down to the Place, from our famous tap; and he would pay for it, he said—satirically, as I am now aware—when he paid the rent. He came upon every occasion on a new horse, and generally attended by a little pack of hounds. For Tom and Bob—two small but most ferocious terriers—he said he had refused five-and-thirty guineas. I thought he was a fool then, of course, but I have now quite a different opinion of Chantilly Ricketts. He possessed a pony, Leporello, which he affirmed to be by far the best pony then extant in this country or in the world at large—I never knew anybody with a pony, by the by, who was not prepared to affirm this—and he had been tempted, in vain it seemed, to part with this animal also for some astounding sum.

I rode over to Wythrop once during the latter portion of his residence there, and found the house turned into little better than a kennel. He was smoking a cigar, with his two favourite dogs, in the drawing-room—not that *they* were smoking just then, although they could do it, for I have seen them myself sitting up with pipes in their mouths, upon their hind-legs, like Christians—preparatory to a rat-hunt about to take place in the same apartment. He put a stop to my natural remonstrances on that occasion by saying good-humouredly: 'Well, my dear sir, I suppose a fifty-pound note will make it all right between us when I go away; and if it will not, I give you my word, you shall have a hundred; and my word is as good as my bond:' which indeed it was, exactly.

The butcher, or the grocer, or the baker, or a combination of these—for he owed everybody—put Tilly into jail without my assistance; but I, as landlord, had of course the first choice of his goods. Two horses—for seizing which I sustained actions from their legitimate owners, who had only lent them to Mr Ricketts upon trial—the celebrated pony, and the brace of wonderful dogs, fell to my share. I was shaking my fist at these latter animals, intending, however, the gesture to apply to their master rather than to themselves, when the more savage of the two, Thomas, flew at my thigh, and was disengaged from it not without great difficulty; while the pony ate his head off, or nearly so, for weeks in my stable, and was sold with his canine friends at last for fourteen pounds. All this time were Tilly's creditors appealing to me to see them righted, instigated thereto by the incarcerated Mr Ricketts himself. He told them that, with his priceless Leporello in my possession, I had absolutely become his debtor to an extent that would

cover all their bills; and he wrote me a letter to that effect, which had this very singular postscript: '*P. S.* I think it right to state, sir, that I look upon my present misfortunes as being in some sort a judgment upon me for demeaning myself by going to your house to dinner—to a brewery: none of my family, no Ricketts, from time immemorial, was ever before mixed up with anything connected with *trade*.' And this annoyed my dear wife not a little, who, I am sorry to say, is rather thin-skinned about our celebrated tap. The house at Wythrop is certainly unsuited to one of my calling; but it was left to me—and one generally takes what is left to one without apology—by my great-uncle, who never took to me kindly, and who, as I am now convinced, carried out his animosity to the very last; the unforgiving old gentleman, broken in health, moribund as indeed he was, actually extended his resentment beyond the grave, in leaving me his house in the country. He well knew, for he was a man of business, that it must needs be a hundred and fifty pounds a year out of my pocket at least, and his malice has been more than gratified.

There are respectable tenants to be got, of course; but these are in reality more expensive—they certainly take more money out of my pocket—than the people who don't pay. There is scarcely anything in the house that suits them; and where anything does, they are clamorous to have more of it. 'There are only two arm-chairs in the dining-room,' complained one of these importunate: 'where, I should like to know, is my mother-in-law to sit?' And 'more tables' was set down laconically by another among a number of items of things wanted, just as the nabob demanded his 'more curricles.' The pump is out of order, or the roof lets in the rain; the park-palings want renewal, the drawing-room carpet is wearing into holes; the well runs dry, and requires to be dug twenty feet deeper in the summer-time; and the cistern bursts in the winter. Every new tenant has his new grievances, and every season its particular array of wants and repairs: nor does it by any means follow that I bring the Place to perfection after all, for the improvements that have been effected at a great expense to please one incomer, are the very things, perhaps, which induce his successor to demand a reduction in the rent. If tenant-right in Ireland means anything like what it has meant at Wythrop Place, it must be one of the most impertinent dictations which it ever entered into the brain of man to defend. About a twelvemonth ago, the greatest shock to my feelings as a landlord was administered, which they have as yet experienced. I had taken especial pains to insure myself against risk with this particular tenant—if I can call a man particular who stuck at nothing—not even at felony. I had carefully eschewed the aristocracy and the sporting circles, and had selected my man from among the honest and steady-going candidates of the middle class; he was a City man of the very highest respectability, who did not know a fox-hound from a harrier, which he pronounced without the 'h'; and he was, to conclude, a drysalter, and his name was Stubbs. The estate-agent referred me to this gentleman's own place of business in London, as a guarantee of his solvency; and, indeed, it was a magnificent establishment. Moreover, the good simple fellow had never put his nose in a country-house before, so that he would not have known what was wanting, even had not everything been as complete as it was. This model-tenant kept a most respectable cob, which was supplied with hay from my own rick at a very moderate cost, for I am not the man in these sort of cases to be left behindhand in liberality. If there had been a breath of suspicion—which there, of course, was not—regarding Mr Stubbs's honesty, one glance at that cob would have left its proprietor spotless and unsullied. It seemed, as Tilly Ricketts would

have said, to have been got by Respectability out of Decorum, and to answer in itself for the unimpeachable integrity of breeder, trainer, owner, and all that had had anything to do with it. Mr Stubbs was elected churchwarden before he had been my tenant five months, entirely upon the merits of that cob.

One afternoon, my eldest son, who is a sharp lad, and has been admitted as a partner into our concern, being up in the City about hops, thought he would just take a look at the establishment of Stubbs & Company, to see how matters were going on in that quarter. Imagine his horror when he saw the shutters up, and 'To Be Sold' in great, staring characters all over them. 'I thought, father,' said he, 'when I read these words, that they would have some application to us.' And so, in truth, they had. The very day preceding his London failure, Mr Stubbs and family left their country-house at Wythrop for I-wish-I-could-find-out-what-place. He previously committed the felonious act of selling my entire hayrick, and walked away with the proceeds; he rode away, that is, upon the respectable cob; and is now, I have little doubt, upon the strength of it, churchwarden somewhere else. All I know of him or his, is this: I had the pleasure of reading in the *Times* newspaper of September last, the following announcement, which is, I think, under the circumstances, unique and cool even for a tenant: 'On Friday last, at Pau in the Pyrenees, the Viscount Cavalcantissimo to Louisa, daughter of Joseph Stubbs, Esq., late of Wythrop House, Wythrop, Hants.'

WHAT HAS BECOME OF THE GROUSE?

'FIRST of February, partridge and pheasant shooting ends.' This is the business-like announcement in the almanac, which informs those who are not addicted to *Bell's Life* or the *Field*, that the close of the sportsman's year has arrived—grouse, black-cock, and ptarmigan shooting having ended on the 10th of December. This, therefore, is the appropriate time to make a few remarks on the cry of the sportsmen as to the grouse and other game-birds: 'Where are they?' which was answered only by the iteration of the moorland echo—Where are they? Sportsmen look forward with dread to the extirpation of their favourite birds; and other interested classes, including landlords, game-dealers, &c., tremble for their profits; while the naturalist shrinks from an impending addition to the already numerous catalogue of extinct British birds. The alarm is not unreasonable: in another generation, the descendants of the industrious sportsmen who flourished in the reign of Queen Victoria, may perhaps be found sighing over a stuffed grouse, or examining with regretful eye the skeleton of a partridge or the portrait of a black-cock in the natural history department of the British Museum; where, at the same time, if we may rely upon the prophecies of Mr John Cleghorn, visitors will be shewn drawings of the *Chupea harenus*, the salmon, and many other extinct but recent species of our British fishes, accompanied, in all probability, with a sermon from the exhibitor, having for its moral that pithy old proverb which hints at the killing of the goose for the sake of its golden eggs. The decrease in our stock of grouse has been at intervals the cry for some years now; but the more decided failure of the shooting-season now past has reawakened public attention in earnest. In this season, our sportsmen have been unprecedentedly industrious in the pursuit of their destructive business. But their efforts, so far as grouse are concerned, have

been almost fruitless; no splendid bags have resulted; the Highland sheltie has had no great burden to carry home to the quarters in the glen. Mile after mile of wild mountain heath has the wearied sportsman trod in vain. Mountains have been skirted, bogs forded, or still more cleverly avoided, but the crack of his gun was unheard, and the health-giving breeze brought no scent of the bird. The silence remained unbroken by the whitter of the mountain partridge or the cry of the moorfowl; vast spaces of heather and gorse stretched before him into the far distance, and thousands of acres were wearily scanned with the glass, and as wearily measured by the foot, but scarcely a shot could be had; or perhaps—as at Dunmaglass and Aberchaldar—a shooting-party of four gentlemen, practised sportsmen, might bring down—five and a half brace! The fact is avouched by the *Morning Post* early in August. 'Grouse killed on the Dunmaglass and Aberchaldar Hills, Inverness-shire, August 12—Sir H. de Trafford, none; Captain F. Scott, one brace; Mr J. S. Entwistle, four brace; Mr A. de Trafford, one bird.' But even at a still later part of the season—that is, in November—grouse continue as scarce as before; and a paragraph in the *Inverness Courier*, relative to the sport in Lord Seafeld's covers at Glen Urquhart, gives two grouse out of 906 head of other game which had fallen to eight guns in the course of four days. The paragraph is as follows: 'The total baggings in four days—Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday—were as follow: 254 pheasants, 13 partridges, 40 wood-cocks, 8 black game, 2 grouse, 129 hares, 438 rabbits, and 22 roe-deer.' Our purpose in noticing the failure of the grouse-shooting in these pages is to hint that the decreasing supplies have been attributed to wrong causes—namely, disease and destruction of eggs.

The following paragraphs, culled from the *Field* and a variety of other sources, will put the reader in possession of the common ideas as to the causes of the disease. Sportsmen are not agreed on the matter. One division of the little army of disputants attributes the malady (principally tapeworm) to the excessive heather-burning which has now become annual on some of our moors; another blames the pasturage of sheep as the sole cause. A gentleman of the name of 'Grouse,' who holds a moor of 20,000 acres, says that no disease exists upon it, and that birds are very plentiful; that on 'the 12th' sixty brace might easily have been bagged; and he attributes this large stock of healthy birds mainly to the ground being clear of sheep, and that there is no heather-burning, in order to admit of the production of grass for the black-faces; while 'on an adjoining moor (only separated by a loch), which is 80,000 acres in extent, where burning is practised, and the ground overrun with sheep, grouse are so scarce that with hard fagging he can bag only fifteen brace in a day.' It would seem from a series of articles on the subject, that 'when sheep are in excess, which is very commonly the case now in Scotland on many moors, heather must be burned to a great extent to make room for them, and to produce fresh food, thus depriving grouse of shelter; and in the next place, as sheep are perpetually in motion, they constantly disturb the ground, and in the breeding-season unquestionably destroy nests; and in the autumn they are dressed with an ointment composed of butter, tar, and mercury. A question then arises—Whether this dressing so far affects the constitution of the sheep for the time, that the soil and herbage are influenced thereby so as to be prejudicial to grouse.' Another gentleman, who distinguishes himself as 'An Old Un,' and who seems to

have great experience in sporting matters, says: 'If the laird will favour his native tenant, and make sheep his primary object, and will not sympathise a little with his feathered friend, grouse will soon disappear off the ground, and, in my opinion, from the following causes: smearing with that abominable, poisonous, offensive-smelling grease and tar; and continually herding five or six thousand sheep, with a team of colley-dogs.' Further, the 'Old Un' says: 'Let Scotland return to its natural state, as I found it in 1832—feeding on its grouse-ports the Highland black-faced sheep, in place of its foreign usurper the white-faced Cheviot. The black-faced requires less care, less burning of heather, less gathering and driving, less grease and tar; stains the ground less; travels less in large bodies; and with its quick eye and light and careful tread, respects the nest and eggs of his native companion.' Colonel Whyte, another authority, writes to the *Field* to say that the grouse of a district in Donegal, being afflicted with the tape-worm, is 'confirmation strong as proof of Holy Writ' that he is right in supposing that in sheep-farming and its concomitants the disease originates—especially as a Scotch sheep-farmer has lately taken possession of the land!

In another letter, the colonel tells us that 'the place a grouse loves to feed on is knolly ground, with the young short heather sprouting up; and this is precisely the spot the sheep selects for his nightly resting-place. Can we wonder, then, at the livers of grouse being diseased, feeding as they do on heather besmeared with mercury? Now, these spots are rare, either on mountains wholly burned or on mountains never burned—and under one category or the other come three parts of the Scottish hills—and, being rare, are of course much frequented by both. . . . The present breed of grouse in Scotland I believe to be for the most part thoroughly broken down in constitution, and accordingly every wet winter brings on an access of the disease; and as weakly fathers beget weakly offspring, so year by year under the present system, they will become more and more delicate.'

A series of letters have also been appearing on heather-burning, in the *Inverness Courier*; we have room, however, for but one extract on the subject. 'Veritas' thus decides in favour of the burning: 'I have lived among the hills a great many years now, and, although neither sportsman nor farmer, have had many opportunities, not only of hearing the subject of grouse-disease discussed, but also of noticing the effects of heather-burning; and feel warranted in stating, without fear of much contradiction, that the strongest and healthiest birds are invariably to be found on moors which are regularly and systematically burned.'

We need say little about the destruction of the eggs. It is certain, however, that many are destroyed—some by accident, others by poachers, who supply the dealers with them. Grouse-eggs have been largely transported to England, for experiments in stocking English moors. The *Spectator* newspaper, in a recent article, indicates still another way of disposing of the eggs: 'The birds are failing, partly from a disease which is carrying off great numbers, but there are two other causes of their disappearance. The watchers of the deer-forests, thinking only of the antlered game, dislike the grouse because they attract poachers, and destroy the eggs wherever they find them, and thus abolish one form of sport to save another. But we suspect the worse disease under which the grouse suffer is the increase in the number of sportsmen.' This last suggestion, in our opinion, points to the true cause of the scarcity of the birds, although combined in some measure with the disease; and we have not arrived at this opinion without much personal inquiry, and after the perusal of a large amount of correspond-

ence on the subject. That overshooting is the real cause of the decrease of the grouse, is sufficiently obvious even from the fact, that the rent paid for liberty to shoot grouse and deer this season was somewhere about L.200,000. But even this large sum will cease to be wondered at, when the reader learns that 100,000 brace of each of the principal game-birds—grouse, partridge, pheasant, snipe—are required in London alone, reaching the metropolis in the shape of consignments to wholesale and retail dealers, and as presents to friends. If we average these as yielding the sportsman half-a-crown per brace, it gives us a sum equivalent to about a fourth of the rental. This overshooting is caused to a large extent by persons renting shooting-grounds who are unable to afford so expensive a luxury, and who therefore 'shoot like mad,' as the Ettrick Shepherd expresses it, to make up the rent—caring not whether they leave a sufficient stock of birds to multiply and replenish the earth. It has been said that

A London brewer shoots the grouse,
And a lordling stalks the deer.

But while these parties can no doubt afford to pay for grouse-shooting or deer-stalking, without the annoyance of feeling that they must reproduce the money, there is another class who make a business of the sport, and who bestow a large amount of hard work on it, in order to turn it to commercial account.

As illustrating the system of shooting for profit, we may state that we happen to know two humble but industrious men who followed this plan with great shrewdness. These men were natives of one of our Highland glens, and followed the business of what is called in Edinburgh chairmen, although their title of street-porters will be more generally understood. Roderick and Duncan had a good connection, and were well employed as messengers during the winter season, when the various courts of law are in session; but as each returning summer arrived, the brothers found that it entailed upon them a forced idleness of four or five months consequent upon 'the long vacation,' and that however busy they might have been during the winter, their earnings were insufficient to carry them over the dull months of their vacation. Having once or twice attended gentlemen to the Highlands for a few weeks' shooting about the glorious 12th, it came to pass that eventually, having made careful and accurate arrangements, they rented a shooting on their own account, and set actively to work with their own two guns, and one or two hired attendants, determined to shoot the rent out of the place and a profit besides—which they did. This is only one instance out of many. Billiard-room keepers, livery-stable keepers, and others having strong ideas of combining pleasure and business, frequently rent a moor, and of course take care not to lose by the speculation. It is perfectly clear that such sportsmen as these have little care as to whether they leave a stock of breeding-birds or not; they rarely visit the same ground twice, to make sure of obtaining value for their money, this being the only side of the question they look at. No wonder that gentlemen following these parties think they have stumbled either upon 'Glendo' or 'Glen-diddle.'

Look, too, how times are changed—how steam-boats and railways flash across the country and up to town. Formerly, there were no such rapid modes of conveyance, and game having to be sent by the mail-coach at a considerable cost of carriage, smaller quantities were consumed. Then the population has increased so considerably as to produce a proportionate demand; every year the supply augments, because every little retailer's wife must now-a-days have her occasional dinner-party, and of course, if it is in season, she will have game on the table. All this

adds to the demand; and the demand must be supplied, say the dealers; and rent must be paid, say the shooters; and we too must live, say the poachers; and so the poor grouse, in the end, pays for all.

NIGHT-VIEW OF A NEGRO TOWN.

LAST April, an African traveller favoured us with a *Photograph of a Negro Town*. It was taken, as such pictures demand, in the daytime, and shewed the place in its quiet, dreamy state, winking in the sun. He has now sent us a companion-picture, yet of another kind. The town has roused itself up, for darkness has come down; and we view by firelight the employments and recreations of the inhabitants.

The sun had reached its half-way degree from the meridian towards the horizon by the time my cicero had fulfilled his office and taken his leave; and feeling as if I had shared in the evolutions of a field-day, I was glad to find our quarters deserted, and to throw myself into the king's gay white net hammock, which seemed specially to commend itself to my notice, as a sort of sudatory strainer. I took to it instinctively; my head and shoulders gravitated down an inclined plane in one direction, my feet followed the example in the other, and the dorsal column thus formed a luxurious curve. There was a charm, too, in the cool mellow light of the piazza, in the blandness of the atmosphere, and the dead stillness of the hour; and I felt that I was 'at home,' and cared not a straw about its want of the social element.

The hammock has decided attractions for fatigue as well as indolence, and is as great a promoter of day-dreaming as of sleep. It will not do, it is true, for a long night's stage—for the turnings and twistings of the dyspeptic, plethoric, phlegmatic, or rheumatic sleeper; but as the passage from a serious prolepsis or the pages of a dull book into a dozy 'dog-sleep' or a wholesome nap, or for a parenthetical siesta before dinner, it is unquestionably a commendable contrivance, and worthy of a more civilised origin than is commonly ascribed to it. It claims, however, to be enjoyed *al fresco*; and in this respect, whether in a warm climate, or warm weather in any climate, the couch or easy-chair has no pretensions either to its pleasantness or its sanitary virtues.

But on this occasion, after a time, a restless sense of loneliness came over me. What had become of the king and the chiefs whom I had so recently left on the spot? Ah! yes—the fourth period of daily prayer—probably so; still, very odd, all so silent; no one to be seen; nothing moving; nothing—and yet stillness itself seems audible, like the breathing of silence; a whispering of some spirit in the air, or the 'running of the sand in the great hour-glass of Time;' while those long expansive shadows, stealthily creeping, creeping over the earth, are measuring off the remnant of the day. But somewhere hereabout my conceptions must have turned a corner, for I lost sight of them. I was now in the misty regions of Queen Mab, and doing a fair bit of business in the shadowy line myself. I at length, however, acquired some vague sense of sound, like the murmuring surges of the ocean; a sense of seeing also ensued, and gradually I recognised six or eight chiefs seated about the piazza, listening with a sedate complacency to a recital of my morning adventures from my voluble attendant. As soon as he saw that my eyes were open, bang went his 'English' at me in a moment.

'Ah! *kinmerforey*, ole man,' said he, 'you slip, you slip (sleep)—fine slip, fine slip, eh?—berry fine; fine walk, fine town, fine women—berry fine, eh? yes!'

The king, seated in the piazza of his house opposite, seemed engaged in a desultory conversation with his minister and two or three other chiefs. The last beams of the retiring sun were now to be seen only

in the roseate tints of the western sky; the cows, as usual, were returning of their own accord from their pasturage, and passing, unattended, in single file, into the further yard. This little specimen of African 'routine' was quite charming; and by the time I had effectually demonstrated the efficacy of the 'cold-water remedy' in overcoming drowsiness, an odour of stewed something, with indubitable boiled rice, was borne into the house by our two handmaidens, who whisked off again with an involuntary giggle, and the king and the chiefs were once more retiring from the yard on their way to the mosque.

As the evening advanced, both piazzas resumed for a while something more of the social aspect. It seemed, however, that courtesy, or mere ceremony, with possibly a spice of unsatiated curiosity, dictated the visits, rather than a desire for interchange of ideas among the visitors themselves; and after some occasional sententious remarks, a little snuff now and then, and a listless handling of the beads which some few wore round their necks, most of them retired, and we accompanied the minister across the yard for a chit-chat with the king. But it was one of those lovely nights when external nature seems to appeal to us so irresistibly for sympathy, and to inspire at once that dreamy complacency which disposes us rather to think than to talk, and which renders it irksome, or, at least, demands something like an effort to sustain even a desultory conversation. The blue vault of heaven was studded with glittering stars; the moon, now advancing to the zenith, was mingling her silvery beams with the light of the radiant host that surrounded her; and nothing disturbed the prevailing silence but our own voices, till suddenly the distant sound of the native drum, and the low murmuring cadences of the evening-song, came upon my ears. We soon took our leave of the king, and I taxed the courtesy of the minister for his company in a walk.

While leisurely pursuing the same direction I had taken in the morning, we now met with several individuals and small groups of loquacious young women, who, in passing, exchanged some short complimentary observation with the distinguished functionary who accompanied me. The close-fitting wrappers of the damsels, with cloths over their heads, after the fashion of the *mantilla*, were sufficient to betray their sex in the equivocal light of the hour, had their voices not proclaimed it. In the meantime, the wild sounds of the drums in different quarters of the town, the simple swelling strains from the leading voices, and the lower cadences of the responsive chorus, subsiding into a murmur, gradually became more and more distinct. The patches of light, that gleamed here and there, flickered brighter and brighter against the lower region of the sky, and brought a large portion of the high funnel-shaped roofs, the interjacent trees, and especially the tall palms with their crested heads, into bold relief. The nearest fire was now close at hand. Its glowing light streamed through the open doorways of the *sadiny* across the street as we approached, but here, neither sound of drum nor of voices was to be recognised. Voices, however, came upon my ears simultaneously with the sudden glare upon my sight as we entered the yard, and I beheld in the centre of it a dark group of figures surrounding the flames and transient bright sparks that waywardly flickered and glittered in the fantastic folds of the smoke that was spreading its gloomy canopy above their heads. They were all seated in close order upon the ground, forming a complete circle; but the monotonous jabbering of their voices, as well as the sedateness of their demeanour, gave no indication of hilarity. Possibly, it was some religious ceremony, some nocturnal freak of superstition to which their attention seemed riveted by the earnestness of their credulity—some propitiatory worship, perhaps, of the

element which awes while it cheers and fascinates. Such might have been the inference in the mind of a stranger, from the character of the scene on first entering the yard; the fire materially increasing in effect the proportions of the dark opaque group of figures around it, as well as of the towering conical roofs of the adjacent buildings; whilst the details of the enclosure below, thrown into obscurity by their lengthened shadows, conspired to create that mysterious solemnity which seemed to have settled upon the spot.

On approaching the circle, however, I found that it was composed of between twenty and thirty boys, varying in their ages from eight to sixteen, with one adult only—an elderly man of spare figure and attenuated limbs, with a long triangular-shaped visage, high cheek-bones, small deep-set eyes, peering from under the eaves of a high projecting forehead, and a bristling crop of white stubble covering his chin, and contrasting strangely with the other swarthy features. Our presence caused no interruption to the steadfastness of their purpose, whatever it might be. The old gentleman raised his head, and then rounded his shoulders a little more into a bend of courtesy; but the jabbering still went on among the youngsters. At length one of the boys suddenly raised his voice and pointed to another; a short pause ensued, and something that seemed a brief admonition having come from the old president, on they went again. A similar interruption occurred again and again, till at length the fire began to languish, and a youngster jumped up, hurried to a heap of dried sticks, tied in separate small bundles, and was again squatting and jabbering in his place as the fire began to feed on his donation. The young tyros, it appeared, were graduating in the mazes of that Mohammedan treasury of knowledge called the Koran, and rehearsing the task of the night. Whenever a boy made a slip in a word or pronunciation, he was checked by another boy, the old preceptor having a manuscript portion of the Book before him; and the boys seemed pretty eager in their watch upon one another. In short, the scene before us was a school. The sons of different neighbours were in class with the sons of the owner or occupier of the premises; and in this way the several *karamojahs*, or schoolmasters, within the town attend their classes—each boy always providing a bundle of wood to maintain the fire.

'But why,' I inquired of my companion, 'make night the period of tuition?'

'Oh, day made for work,' he replied. 'Some boys have school by fire in the morning too, before sunrise.'

How very little idea have we in England of anything like schooling or education going on among the negro tribes of Africa, saving that which is exclusively the work of our own missionaries! How remote from all our conceptions of their general character, habits, and aspirations, is the fact that 'learning' is held in high estimation, and forms a claim to distinction and respect; that Arabic is studied in public schools of wide repute in the heart of Nigritia, or the land of the negroes, within a few degrees of the equator; and that, among the swarthy natives, men are to be met with as well versed in Biblical history as the generality of laymen in England, and who are familiar also with two or three languages besides their own. It is true that their intellectual pursuits and acquirements are not very profound, and that elementary instruction is pretty much limited to reading and writing; but this is precisely the case with Mohammedan nations or tribes in general. The fact, however, appears to be little known, or little regarded, that the deism of Mecca is fast gaining ground upon the fetishism of the pagans, and exercising a powerful influence upon the social and moral condition of the negro tribes of these regions.

But our attention was not wholly directed to the

boys. We found several men of different ages now assembled in the piazzas of two or three of the houses within the yard; either seated or occupying a hammock, and interchanging their ideas on current or traditional events. Their great dependence upon tradition causes them to indulge habitually in retrospection, and in lauding the auspicious events of departed days. But our visit served to concentrate for a while their speculations on the passing present, with which I was specially identified, and more especially on the very odd notion of my coming among them only to 'see the country' and 'say how do?' This puzzled them; they could not make it out; they shook their heads, and pondered; and took snuff—the only form in which they use tobacco—to clear their perceptions. But distant sounds were inviting us in another direction; so, after shaking hands, and receiving their compliments, we left them with an interesting subject to dilate upon, and work out a solution at their leisure.

After passing out of the yard into the street, we were soon again within the range of light from the next fire. The sound of drums and voices broke upon our ears, and another interesting picture opened before us. Here, too, a living circle of some fifty or sixty individuals was formed in the middle of the yard, the fire being at one side. The circle was composed chiefly of young men and women standing intermingled, with the drummer seated on one side of the fire *tum-tum-a-running* with an air of great self-sufficiency, whilst two young fellows were flinging themselves into angular attitudes as they whirled round within the area; eliciting, as it seemed, in a long measured strain, the extempore criticisms of the drummer as the leader, and the chorus accompaniment of the surrounding company. But our arrival, as soon as it was observed, at once changed the burden of the strain; the drum-sticks announced the transition in a brief rattling flourish, and opened a gap for the running commentary that ensued on the welcome we were entitled to, and the attributes we were respectively presumed to possess—quite a burden in themselves. Comparatively few of the company composed the *corps de ballet*, although all were numbered among the vocal performers. The dancing was, indeed, rather of the impulsive or *ad libitum* order—as devoid of any fixed principles or rules as of what we would call grace—the turning the toes inward, for instance, was awful, and even impulse itself was now and then kept in check, or became ludicrously confounded with something like *mauvaise honte*, or sheer incapacity for its work. The commonest achievement was that of a young fellow jumping straight across the ring, and figuring for a moment or two before an opposite damsel, as an invitation or challenge to draw her out. In this he was generally unsuccessful, and he returned jumping disconsolately to his place. Two of the more accomplished and self-sufficient of the young men at length began to display their powers; and a damsel followed the example, although disdainfully, seeming to figure about with an air of independence, and eyeing the capering gallants askance, as if to say: 'What you want? *Gö löng—le'v me löne!*' Inspiring applause was of course accorded to her by the audience, which had now somewhat increased, and those of the number who composed the front row had squatted upon the ground. The leader of the 'band' was here relieved by another, fresh and vigorous for the task; and this change was effected so quickly, that there was no palpable pause in the action of the drum-sticks. Another rattling flourish, and another leading voice, with some appropriate morsel of vocal sentiment, proclaimed the inauguration of the new conductor. To the responsive voices of the spectators was now added a general clapping of hands with one sharp simultaneous blow in unison with the time; the drum itself spoke out with a more impressive *staccato*

intonation, and the fire, responding cheerfully to a poke, illumined the scene with a brighter gleam; while the 'dancers,' sidling and wheeling, and wriggling and kicking, and sprawling, were of course the observed of all observers. This went on for some time—the dancing, the drumming, and the applause growing faster and more furious—till one of the damsel's competitors, springing with one bound clean over the fire, as the only point of egress, disappeared from the scene with the dexterity of a harlequin. The scene had now reached its climax. The drum-sticks suddenly relaxed into a staggering rattle, and the performance was at an end. We now, for the first time, became conscious that we had been working away sympathetically with our head and shoulders, and with something like that impulsiveness with which a rider in a prodigious hurry finds himself striving to get ahead of his horse. No wonder the sedate companion of my evening ramble had disappeared; and on looking round, I confronted instead my incorrigible eulogist who had attended me in the morning, his 'English' of course effervescing in a moment. 'Ah! *kinmerforey*,' cried he, 'ole man, you dance, eh? Fine dance, fine dance—berry fine; fine gal, fine gal—berry fine, eh? yes!'

OCEOLA:

A ROMANCE.

CHAPTER XX.—FRONTIER JUSTICE.

I was not allowed long to enjoy the sweets of home. A few days after my arrival, I received an order to repair to Fort King, the Seminole agency, and headquarters of the army of Florida. General Clinch there commanded. I was summoned upon his staff.

Not without chagrin, I prepared to obey the order. It was hard to part so soon from those who dearly loved me, and from whom I had been so long separated. Both mother and sister were overwhelmed with grief at my going. Indeed, they urged me to resign my commission, and remain at home.

'Not unwillingly did I listen to their counsel: I had no heart in the cause in which I was called forth; but at such a crisis I dared not follow their advice: I should have been branded as a traitor—a coward. My country had commissioned me to carry a sword. I must wield it, whether the cause be just or unjust—whether to my liking or not. This is called patriotism!'

There was yet another reason for my reluctance to part from home. I need hardly declare it. Since my return, my eyes had often wandered over the lake—often rested on that fair island. Oh, I had not forgotten her!

I can scarcely analyse my feelings. They were mingled emotions. Young love triumphant over older passions—ready to burst forth from the ashes that had long shrouded it—young love penitent and remorseful—doubt, jealousy, apprehension. All these were active within me.

Since my arrival, I had not dared to go forth. I observed that my mother was still distrustful. I had not dared even to question those who might have satisfied me. I passed those few days in doubt, and at intervals under a painful presentiment that all was not well.

Did Maimee still live? Was she true? True! Had she reason? Had she ever loved me?

There were those near who could have answered the first question; but I feared to breathe her name, even to the most intimate.

Bidding adieu to my mother and sister, I took the route. These were not left alone: my maternal uncle—their guardian—resided upon the plantation. The parting moments were less bitter, from the belief that I should soon return. Even if the anticipated campaign should last for any considerable length of time, the scene of my duties would lie near, and I should find frequent opportunities of revisiting them.

My uncle scouted the idea of a campaign, as so did every one. 'The Indians,' he said, 'would yield to the demands of the commissioner. Fools, if they didn't!'

Fort King was not distant; it stood upon Indian ground—fourteen miles within the border, though further than that from our plantation. A day's journey would bring me to it; and in the company of my cheerful 'squire,' Black Jake, the road would not seem long. We bestrode a pair of the best steeds the stables afforded, and were both armed *cap-à-pié*.

We crossed the ferry at the upper landing, and rode within the 'reserve.*' The path—it was only a path—ran parallel to the creek, though not near its banks. It passed through the woods, some distance to the rear of Madame Powell's plantation.

When opposite to the clearing, my eyes fell upon the diverging track. I knew it well: I had oft trodden it with swelling heart.

I hesitated—halted. Strange thoughts careered through my bosom; resolves half-made, and suddenly abandoned. The rein grew slack, and then tightened. The spur threatened the ribs of my horse, but failed to strike.

'Shall I go? Once more behold her? Once more renew those sweet joys of tender love? Once more—Ha, perhaps it is too late! I might be no longer welcome—if my reception should be hostile? Perhaps—'

'What' you doin dar, Massr George? Daat's not tha road to tha fort.'

'I know that, Jake; I was thinking of making a call at Madame Powell's plantation.'

'Mar'm Pow'll plantayshun! Gollys! Massr George—daat all you knows 'bout it?'

'About what?' I inquired with anxious heart.

'Dar's no Mar'm Pow'll da no more; nor hain't a been, since better'n two year—all gone clar 'way.'

'Gone away? Where?'

'Daat dis chile know nuffin 'bout. S'pose da gone some other lokayshun in da rezav; made new clarin somewha else.'

'And who lives here now?'

'Dar ain't neery one lib tha now: tha ole house am deserted.'

'But why did Madame Powell leave it?'

'Ah—daat am a quaw story. Gollys! you nebber hear um, Massr George?'

'No—never.'

'Den I tell um. But s'pose, massr, we ride on. 'T am a gettin' a leetle lateish, an' 'twont do nohow to be cotch arter night in tha woods.'

I turned my horse's head, and advanced along the main road, Jake riding by my side. With aching heart, I listened to his narrative.

'You see, Massr George, 'twar all o' Massr Ringgol—tha ole boss† daat am—an' I b'lieve tha young 'un had 'im hand in dat pie, all same, like tha ole 'un. Waal, you see Mar'm Pow'll she loss some niggas dat war ha slaves. Dey war stole from ha, an' wuss dan stole. Dey war tuk, an' by white men, massr. Tha be folks who say dat Mass' Ringgol—he know'd more'n anybody else 'bout tha whole bizness. But da rubb'ry war blamed on Ned Spence an' Bill William. Waal,

* That portion of Florida reserved for the Seminoles by the treaty of Camp Moultrie, made in 1823. It was a large tract, and occupied the central part of the peninsula.

† Master or proprietor; universally in use throughout the Southern States. From the Dutch 'baas!'

Mar'm Pow'll she go to da law wi' dis yar Ned an' Bill; an' she 'ploys Massr Grubb tha big lawyer dat lib down tha ribba. Now Massr Grubb, he great friend o' Massr Ringgol, an' folks do say dat boaf de two put tha heads together to cheat dat ar Indy-en 'ooman.'

'How?'

'Dis chile don't say for troof, Massr George; he hear um only from da brack folks; tha white folk say diff'rent. But I hear um from Mass' Ringgol's own nigga woodman—Pomp, you know, Massr George? an' he say dat them ar two bosses *did* put tha heads together to cheat dat poor Indy-en 'ooman.'

'In what way, Jake?' I asked impatiently.

'Waal, you see, Massr George, da lawya he want da Indy-en sign ha name to some paper—power ob 'turney, tha call um, I b'lieve. She sign; an' no read tha writin. Whugh! daat paper war no power ob 'turney: it war what tha lawyas call a "bill ob sale."'

'Ha!'

'Yes, Massr George, dat's what um war; an' by dat same bill ob sale all Mar'm Pow'll's niggas an' all ha plantation-clarin war made ober to Massr Grubb.'

'Atrocious scoundrel!'

'Massr Grubb he swar he bought 'em all, an' paid for 'em in cash dollar. Mar'm Pow'll she swar de berry contry. Da judge he decide for Massr Grubb, 'kase great Massr Ringgol he witness; an' folks do say Massr Ringgol now got dat paper in um own safe keepin', an' war at tha bottom ob tha whole bizness.'

'Atrocious scoundrels! oh, villains! But tell me, Jake, what became of Madame Powell?'

'Shortly arter, tha all gone 'way—nob'dy know wha. Da mar'm haself an' dat fine young fellur you know, an' da young Indy-en gal dat ebberybody say war so good-lookin'—yes, Massr George, tha all gone 'way.'

At that moment an opening in the woods enabled me to catch a glimpse of the old house. There it stood in all its gray grandeur, still embowered in the midst of beautiful groves of orange and olive. But the broken fence—the tall weeds standing up against the walls—the shingles here and there missing from the roof—all told the tale of ruin.

There was ruin in my heart, as I turned sorrowing away.

CHAPTER XXI.

INDIAN SLAVES.

It never occurred to me to question the genuineness of Jake's story. What the 'black folks' said was true; I had no doubt of it. The whole transaction was redolent of the Ringgolds and lawyer Grubbs—the latter a half-planter, half-legal practitioner of indifferent reputation.

Jake further informed me that Spence and Williams had disappeared during the progress of the trial. Both afterwards returned to the settlement, but no ulterior steps were taken against them, as there was no one to prosecute!

As for the stolen negroes, they were never seen again in that part of the country. The robbers had no doubt carried them to the slave-markets of Mobile or New Orleans, where a sufficient price would be obtained to remunerate Grubbs for his professional services, as also Williams and Spence for theirs. The land would become Ringgold's, as soon as the Indians could be got out of the country—and this was the object of the 'bill of sale.'

A transaction of like nature between white man and white man would have been regarded as a grave swindle, an atrocious crime. The whites affected not to believe it; but there were some who knew it to be true, and viewed it only in the light of a clever *ruse*!

That it was true, I could not doubt. Jake gave me

reasons that left no room for doubt; in fact, it was only in keeping with the general conduct of the border adventurers towards the unfortunate natives with whom they came in contact.

Border adventurers, did I say? Government agents, members of the Florida legislature, generals, planters, rich as Ringgold, all took part in similar speculations. I could give names. I am writing truth, and do not fear contradiction.

It was easy enough, therefore, to credit the tale. It was only one of twenty similar cases of which I had heard. The acts of Colonel Gad Humphreys, the Indian agent—of Major Phagan, another Indian agent—of Dexter, the notorious negro-stealer—of Floyd—of Douglass—of Robinson and Millburn, are all historic—all telling of outrages committed upon the suffering Seminole. A volume might be filled detailing such swindles as that of Grubbs and Ringgold. In the mutual relations between white man and red man, it requires no skilful advocate to shew on which side must lie the wrongs unrepaid and unavenged. Beyond all doubt, the Indian has ever been the victim.

It is needless to add that there were retaliations: how could it be otherwise?

One remarkable fact discloses itself in these episodes of Floridian life. It is well known that slaves thus stolen from the Indians *always returned to their owners whenever they could!* To secure them from finding their way back, the Dexters and Douglasses were under the necessity of taking them to some distant market, to the far 'coasts' of the Mississippi—to Natchez or New Orleans.

There is but one explanation of this social phenomenon; and that is, that the slaves of the Seminole were *not* slaves. In truth, they were treated with an indulgence to which the helot of other lands is a stranger. They were the agriculturists of the country, and their Indian master was content if they raised him a little corn—just sufficient for his need—with such other vegetable products as his simple *cuisine* required. They lived far apart from the dwellings of their owners. Their hours of labour were few, and scarcely compulsory. Surplus product was their own; and in most cases they became rich—far richer than their own masters, who were less skilled in economy. Emancipation was easily purchased, and the majority were actually free—though from such chains it was scarcely worth while to escape. If slavery it could be called, it was the mildest form ever known upon earth—far differing from the abject bondage of Ham under either Shem or Japheth.

It may be asked how the Seminoles became possessed of these black slaves? Were they 'runaways' from the States—from Georgia and the Carolinas, Alabama, and the plantations of Florida? Doubtless a few were from this source; but most of the runaways were not claimed as property; and, arriving among the Indians, became free. There was a time when by the stern conditions of the Camp Moultrie Covenant these 'absconding' slaves were given up to their white owners; but it is no discredit to the Seminoles, that they were always *remiss* in the observance of this disgraceful stipulation. In fact, it was not always possible to surrender back the fugitive negro. Black communities had concentrated themselves in different parts of the reserve, who under their own leaders were socially free, and strong enough for self-defence. It was with these that the runaway usually found refuge and welcome. Such a community was that of 'Harry' amidst the morasses of Pease Creek—of 'Abram' at Micosauky—of 'Charles' and the 'mulatto king.'

No; the negro slaves of the Seminoles were not runaways from the plantations; though the whites would wish to make it appear so. Very few were of this class. The greater number was the 'genuine

property' of their Indian owners, so far as a slave can be called *property*. At all events, they were *legally* obtained—some of them from the Spaniards, the original settlers, and some by fair purchase from the American planters themselves.

How purchased? you will ask. What could a tribe of savages give in exchange for such a costly commodity? The answer is easy. Horses and horned cattle. Of both of these the Seminoles possessed vast herds. On the evacuation by the Spaniards, the savannas swarmed with cattle, of Andalusian race—half-wild. The Indians caught and reclaimed them—became their owners.

This, then, was the *quid pro quo*—quadrupeds in exchange for bipeds!

The chief of the crimes charged against the Indians was the *stealing of cattle*—for the white men had their herds as well. The Seminoles did not deny that there were bad men among them—lawless fellows difficult to restrain. Where is the community without scamps?

One thing was very certain. The Indian chiefs, when fairly appealed to, have always evinced an earnest desire to make restoration: and exhibited an energy in the cause of justice, entirely unknown upon the opposite side of their border.

It differed little how they acted, so far as regarded their character among their white neighbours. These had made up their mind that the dog should be hanged; and it was necessary to give him a bad name. Every robbery, committed upon the frontier, was of course the act of an Indian. White burglars had but to give their faces a coat of Spanish brown, and justice could net see through the paint.

CHAPTER XXII.

A CIRCUITOUS TRANSACTION.

Such were my reflections as I journeyed on—suggested by the sad tale to which I had been listening.

As if to confirm their correctness, an incident at that moment occurred, exactly to the point.

We had not ridden far along the path, when we came upon the tracks of cattle. Some twenty head must have passed over the ground, going in the same direction as ourselves—towards the Indian 'reserve.'

The tracks were fresh—almost quite fresh. I was tracker enough to know that they must have passed within the hour. Though cloistered so long within college walls, I had not forgotten all the forest-craft taught me by young Powell.

The circumstance of thus coming upon a cattle-trail, fresh or old, would have made no impression upon me. There was nothing remarkable about it. Some Indian herdsmen had been driving home their flock; and that the drivers were Indians, I could perceive by the moccasin prints in the mud. It is true, some frontiers-men wear the moccasin; but these were not the footprints of white men. The turned-in toes,* the high instep, and other trifling signs which, from early training, I knew how to translate, proved that the tracks were Indian.

So were they, agreed my groom, and Jake was no 'slouch' in the ways of the woods. He had all his life been a keen 'coon-hunter—a trapper of the swamp-hare, the 'possum,' and the 'gobbler.' Moreover, he had been my companion upon many a deer-hunt—many a chase after the gray fox, and the rufous 'cat.' During my absence he had added greatly to his experiences. He had succeeded his former rival in the post of woodman, which brought him daily in contact with the denizens of the forest, and constant observation of their habits had increased his skill.

* It is art, not nature, that causes this peculiarity; it is done in the cradle.

It is a mistake to suppose that the negro brain is incapable of that acute reasoning which constitutes a cunning hunter. I have known black men who could read 'sign' and lift a trail with as much intuitive quickness as either red or white. Black Jake could have done it.

I soon found that in this kind of knowledge he was now my master; and, almost on the instant, I had cause to be astonished at his acuteness.

I have said that the sight of the cattle-tracks created no surprise in either of us. At first it did not; but we had not ridden twenty paces further, when I saw my companion suddenly rein up, at the same instant giving utterance to one of those ejaculations peculiar to the negro thorax, and closely resembling the 'wugh' of a startled hog.

I looked in his face. I saw by its expression that he had some revelation to make.

'What is it, Jake?'

'Golly! Massr George, d' you see daat?'

'What?'

'Daat down dar.'

'I see a ruck of cow-tracks—nothing more.'

'Doant you see dat big 'un?'

'Yes—there is one larger than the rest.'

'By Gosh! it am de big ox Ballface—I know um track anywha—many's tha load o' cypruss log dat ar ox hab toated for ole massr.'

'What? I remember Baldface. You think the cattle are ours?'

'No, Massr George—I'spect tha be da lawya Grubb's cattle. Ole massr sell Ballface to Massr Grubb more'n a year 'go. Daat am Bally's track for sartin.'

'But why should Mr Grubb's cattle be here in Indian ground, and so far from his plantation?—and with Indian drivers, too?'

'Dat ere's jest what dis chile can't clary make out, Massr George.'

There was a singularity in the circumstance that induced reflection. The cattle could not have strayed so far of themselves. Their voluntary swimming of the river was against such a supposition. But they were not *straying*; they were evidently *conducted*—and by Indians. Was it a *raid*?—were the beeves being stolen?

It had the look of a bit of thievery, and yet it was not crafty enough. The animals had been driven along a frequented path certain to be taken by those in quest of them; and the robbers—if they were such—had used no precaution to conceal their tracks.

It looked like a theft, and it did not; and it was just this dubious aspect that stimulated the curiosity of my companion and myself—so much so, that we made up our minds to follow the trail, and if possible ascertain the truth.

For a mile or more, the trail coincided with our own route; and then turning abruptly to the left, it struck off towards a track of 'hommock' woods.

We were determined not to give up our intention lightly. The tracks were so fresh, that we knew the herd must have passed within the hour—within the quarter—they could not be distant. We could gallop back to the main road, through some thin pine-timber we saw stretching away to the right; and, with these reflections, we turned head along the cattle-trail.

Shortly after entering the dense forest, we heard voices of men in conversation, and at intervals the routing of oxen.

We alit, tied our horses to a tree, and moved forward afoot.

We walked stealthily and in silence, guiding ourselves by the sounds of the voices, that kept up an almost continual clatter. Beyond a doubt, the cattle whose bellowing we heard were those whose tracks we had been tracing; but equally certain was it, that the voices we now listened to were *not* the voices of those who had driven them!

It is easy to distinguish between the intonation of an Indian and a white man. The men whose conversation reached our ears were whites—their language was our own, with all its coarse embellishments. My companion's discernment went beyond this—he recognised the individuals.

'Golly! Massr George, it ar the two dam ruffins—Spence and Bill William!'

Jake's conjecture proved correct. We drew closer to the spot. The evergreen trees concealed us perfectly. We got up to the edge of an opening; and there saw the herd of beeves, the two Indians who had driven them, and the brace of worthies already named.

We stood under cover watching and listening; and in a very short while, with the help of a few hints from my companion, I comprehended the whole affair.

Each of the Indians—worthless outcasts of their tribe—was presented with a bottle of whisky and a few trifling trinkets. This was in payment for their night's work—the plunder of lawyer Grubbs's pastures.

Their share of the business was now over; and they were just in the act of delivering up their charge as we arrived upon the ground. Their employers, whose droving bout was here to begin, had just handed over their rewards. The Indians might go home and get drunk: they were no longer needed. The cattle would be taken to some distant part of the country—where a market would be readily found—or, what was of equal probability, they would find their way back to lawyer Grubbs's own plantation, having been rescued by the gallant fellows Spence and Williams from a band of Indian rieviers! This would be a fine tale for the plantation fireside—a rare chance for a representation to the police and the powers.

Oh, those savage Seminole robbers! they must be got rid of—they must be 'moved' out.

As the cattle chanced to belong to lawyer Grubbs, I did not choose to interfere. I could tell my tale elsewhere; and, without making our presence known, my companion and I turned silently upon our heels, regained our horses, and went our way reflecting.

I entertained no doubt about the justness of our surmise—no doubt that Williams and Spence had employed the drunken Indians—no more that lawyer Grubbs had employed Williams and Spence, in this circuitous transaction.

The stream must be muddied upward—the poor Indian must be driven to desperation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

REFLECTIONS BY THE WAY.

At college, as elsewhere, I had been jeered for taking the Indian side of the question. Not unfrequently was I 'twitted' with the blood of poor old Powhatan, which, after two hundred years of 'whitening,' must have circulated very sparsely in my veins. It was said I was not *patriotic*, since I did not join in the vulgar clamour, so congenial to nations when they talk of an enemy.

Nations are like individuals. To please them, you must be as wicked as they—feel the same sentiment, or speak it—which will serve as well—affect like loves and hates; in short, yield up independence of thought, and cry 'crucify' with the majority.

This is the world's man—the patriot of the time.

He who draws his deductions from the fountain of truth, and would try to stem the senseless current of a people's prejudgments, will never be popular during life. Posthumously he may, but not this side the grave. Such need not seek the 'living fame' for which yearned the conqueror of Peru: he will not find it. If the true patriot desire the reward of glory, he must look for it only from posterity—long after his 'mouldering bones' have rattled in the tomb.

Haply there is another reward. The *mens conscia recti* is not an idle phrase. There are those who esteem it—who have experienced both sustenance and comfort from its sweet whisperings.

Though sadly pained at the conclusions to which I was compelled—not only by the incident I had witnessed, but by a host of others lately heard of—I congratulated myself on the course I had pursued. Neither by word nor act, had I thrown one feather into the scale of injustice. I had no cause for self-accusation. My conscience cleared me of all ill-will towards the unfortunate people, who were soon to stand before me in the attitude of enemies.

My thoughts dwelt not long on the general question—scarcely a moment. That was driven out of my mind by reflections of a more painful nature—by the sympathies of friendship, of love. I thought only of the ruined widow, of her children, of Maimee. It were but truth to confess that I thought only of the last; but this thought comprehended all that belonged to her. All of hers were endeared, though she was the centre of the endearment.

And for all I now felt sympathy, sorrow—ay, a far more poignant bitterness than grief—the ruin of sweet hopes. I scarcely hoped ever to see them again.

Where were they now? Whither had they gone? Conjectures, apprehensions, fears, floated upon my fancy. I could not avoid giving way to dark imaginings. The men who had committed that crime were capable of any other, even the highest known to the calendar of justice. What had become of these friends of my youth?

My companion could throw no light on their history after that day of wrong. He 'sposed she had move off to some oder clarin in da Indy-en rezar, for folks nebba heern o' um nebbor no more arterward.'

Even this was only a conjecture. A little relief to the heaviness of my thoughts was imparted by the changing scene.

Hitherto we had been travelling through a pine-forest. About noon we passed from it into a large tract of hommock, that stretched right and left of our course. The road or path we followed ran directly across it.

The scene became suddenly changed as if by a magic transformation. The soil under our feet was different, as also the foliage over our heads. The pines were no longer around us. Our view was interrupted on all sides by a thick frondage of evergreen trees—some with broad shining coriaceous leaves, as the magnolia that here grew to its full stature. Alongside it stood the live-oak, the red mulberry, the Bourbon laurel, iron-wood, *Halesia* and *Callicarpa*, while towering above all rose the cabbage-palm, proudly waving its plumed crest in the breeze, as if saluting with supercilious nod its humbler companions beneath.

For a long while we travelled under deep shadow—not formed by the trees alone, but by their parasites as well—the large grape-vine loaded with leaves—the coiling creepers of *smilax* and *hedera*—the silvery tufts of *tillandsia* shrouded the sky from our sight. The path was winding and intricate. Prostrate trunks often carried it in a circuitous course, and often was it obstructed by the matted trellis of the muscadine, whose gnarled limbs stretched from tree to tree like the great stay-cables of a ship.

The scene was somewhat gloomy, yet grand and impressive. It chimed with my feelings at the moment; and soothed me even more than the airy open of the pine-woods.

Having crossed this belt of dark forest, near its opposite edge we came upon one of these singular ponds already described—a circular basin surrounded by hillocks and rocks of testaceous formation—an extinct water-volcano. In the barbarous jargon of

the Saxon settler, these are termed 'sinks,' though most inappropriately, for where they contain water, it is always of crystalline brightness and purity.

The one at which we had arrived was nearly full of the clear liquid. Our horses wanted drink—so did we. It was the hottest hour of the day. The woods beyond looked thinner and less shady. It was just the time and place to make halt; and, dismounting, we prepared to rest, and refresh ourselves.

Jake carried a capacious haversack, whose distended sides—with the necks of a couple of bottles protruding from the pouch—gave proof of the tender solicitude we had left behind us.

The ride had given me an appetite, the heat had caused thirst; but the contents of the haversack soon satisfied the one, and a cup of claret, mingled with water from the cool calcareous fountain, gave luxurious relief to the other.

A cigar was the natural finish to this *al fresco* repast; and, having lighted one, I lay down upon my back, canopied by the spreading branches of an umbrageous magnolia.

I watched the blue smoke as it curled upward among the shining leaves, causing the tiny insects to flutter away from their perch.

My emotions grew still—thought became lull within my bosom—the powerful odour from the coral cones and large wax-like blossoms added its narcotic influences; and I fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A STRANGE AFFAIRITION.

I had been but a few minutes in this state of unconsciousness, when I was awakened by a plunge, as of some one leaping into the pond. I was not startled sufficiently to look around, or even to open my eyes.

'Jake is having a dip,' thought I; 'an excellent idea—I shall take one myself presently.'

It was a wrong conjecture. The black had not leaped into the water, but was still upon the bank near me, where he also had been asleep. Like myself, awakened by the noise, he had started to his feet; and I heard his voice, crying out:

'Lor, Massr George! looker dar!—ain't he a big un? Whugh!'

I raised my head and looked toward the pond. It was not Jake who was causing the commotion in the water—it was a large alligator.

It had approached close to the bank where we were lying; and, balanced upon its broad breast, with muscular arms and webbed feet spread to their full extent, it was resting upon the water, and eyeing us with evident curiosity. With head erect above the surface, and tail stiffly 'cocked' upward, it presented a comic, yet hideous aspect.

'Bring me my rifle, Jake!' I said, in a half-whisper.

'Tread gently, and don't alarm it!'

Jake stole off to fetch the gun; but the reptile appeared to comprehend our intentions—for, before I could lay hands upon the weapon, it revolved suddenly on the water, shot off with the velocity of an arrow, and dived into the dark recesses of the pool.

Rifle in hand, I waited for some time for its reappearance; but it did not again come to the surface. Likely enough, it had been shot at before, or otherwise attacked; and now recognised in the upright form a dangerous enemy. The proximity of the pond to a frequented road rendered probable the supposition.

Neither my companion nor I would have thought more about it, but for the similarity of the scene to one well known to us. In truth, the resemblance was remarkable—the pond, the rocks, the trees that grew around, all bore a likeness to those with which our eyes were familiar. Even the reptile we had just seen—in form, in size, in fierce ugly aspect—appeared the

exact counterpart to that one whose story was now a legend of the plantation.

The wild scenes of that day were recalled; the details starting fresh into our recollection, as if they had been things of yesterday—the luring of the amphibious monster—the perilous encounter in the tank—the chase—the capture—the trial and fiery sentence—the escape—the long lingering pursuit across the lake, and the abrupt awful ending—all were remembered at the moment with vivid distinctness. I could almost fancy I heard that cry of agony—that half-drowned ejaculation, uttered by the victim as he sank below the surface of the water. They were not pleasant memories either to my companion or myself, and we soon ceased to discourse of them.

As if to bring more agreeable reflections, the cheerful 'gobble' of a wild turkey at that moment sounded in our ears; and Jake asked my permission to go in search of the game. No objection being made, he took up the rifle, and left me.

I re-lit my 'havana'—stretched myself as before along the soft award, watched the circling eddies of the purple smoke, inhaled the narcotic fragrance of the flowers, and once more fell asleep.

This time I dreamed, and my dreams appeared to be only the continuation of the thoughts that had been so recently in my mind. They were visions of that eventful day; and once more its events passed in review before me, just as they had occurred.

In one thing, however, my dream differed from the reality. I dreamt that I saw the mulatto rising back to the surface of the water, and climbing out upon the shore of the island. I dreamt that he had escaped unscathed, unhurt—that he had returned to revenge himself—that by some means he had got me in his power, and was about to kill me!

At this crisis in my dream, I was again suddenly awakened—this time not by the plashing of water, but by the sharp 'spang' of a rifle that had been fired near.

'Jake has found the turkeys,' thought I. 'I hope he has taken good aim. I should like to carry one to the fort. It might be welcome at the mess-table, since I hear that the larder is not overstocked. Jake is a good shot, and not likely to miss. If—'

My reflections were suddenly interrupted by a second report, which, from its sharp detonation, I knew to be also that of a rifle.

'My God! what can it mean? Jake has but one gun, and but one barrel—he cannot have reloaded since? he has not had time. Was the first only a fancy of my dream? Surely I heard a report? surely it was that which awoke me? There were two shots—I could not be mistaken.'

In surprise, I sprang to my feet. I was alarmed as well. I was alarmed for the safety of my companion. Certainly I had heard two reports. Two rifles must have been fired, and by two men. Jake may have been one, but who was the other? We were upon dangerous ground. Was it an enemy?

I shouted out, calling the black by name.

I was relieved on hearing his voice. I heard it at some distance off in the woods; but I drew fresh alarm from it as I listened. It was uttered, not in reply to my call, but in accents of terror.

Mystified, as well as alarmed, I seized my pistols, and ran forward to meet him. I could tell that he was coming towards me, and was near; but under the dark shadow of the trees his black body was not yet visible. He still continued to cry out, and I could now distinguish what he was saying.

'Gorramighty! Gorramighty!' he exclaimed in a tone of extreme terror. 'Lor! Massr George, are you hurt?'

'Hurt! what the deuce should hurt me?'

But for the two reports, I should have fancied that

he had fired the rifle in my direction, and was under the impression he might have hit me.

'You are not shot? Gorrarnighty be thank you are not shot, Masser George.'

'Why, Jake, what does it all mean?'

At this moment, he emerged from the heavy timber, and in the open ground I had a clear view of him.

His aspect did not relieve me from the apprehension that something strange had occurred.

He was the very picture of terror, as exhibited in a negro. His eyes were rolling in their sockets—the whites oftener visible than either pupil or iris. His lips were white and bloodless; the black skin upon his face was blanched to an ashy paleness; and his teeth chattered as he spoke. His attitudes and gestures confirmed my belief that he was in a state of extreme terror.

As soon as he saw me, he ran hurriedly up, and grasped me by the arm—at the same time casting fearful glances in the direction whence he had come, as if some dread danger was behind him!

I knew that under ordinary circumstances Jake was no coward—quite the contrary. There must have been peril then—what was it?

I looked back; but in the dark depths of the forest shade, I could distinguish no other object than the brown trunks of the trees.

I again appealed to him for an explanation.

'O Lor! it wa—wa—war him; Ise sure it war him.'

'Him? who?'

'O Masser George; you—you—you shure you not hurt. He fire at you. I see him t—t—take aim; I fire at him—I fire after; I mi—mi—miss; he run away—way—way.'

'Who fired? who ran away?'

'O Gor! it wa—wa—war him; him or him go—go—ghost.'

'For heaven's sake, explain! what him? what ghost? Was it the devil you have seen?'

'Troof, Masser George; dat am de troof. It wa—wa—war de debbel I see: it war Yef' Jake.'

'Yellow Jake?'

CURIOSITIES OF STEAM-POWER.

So great are our obligations to this prime mover, and so important is its place in modern civilisation, that any information relating to it is interesting. Those who have studied the subject will receive with some little surprise the new facts to which we now propose to direct their attention, and which may be said to be of somewhat an anomalous character.

The first of these facts is, that, in the process of condensation, another circumstance than the mere presence of cold water is necessary, at least as regards condensation in tubes; and the second is, that the steam itself may be made to produce a vacuum, the use of which in working engines promises to be of very great importance. We shall endeavour to place both these matters briefly before our readers.

It is popularly known that, in the 'low-pressure' engines, such as are used in most sea-going ships, the 'used steam'—that is, the steam which has just driven the piston from one end of the cylinder to the other—is allowed to escape into a secondary vessel, called the 'condenser,' where it is met by a dash of cold salt water, which condenses it. It is evident, however, that the water formed by this condensation must be saline and impure, and is consequently unfit to return to the boiler with good effect. But a very great improvement on this system is in contemplation, which consists in the condensation being carried on in a tube passing through cold salt water, not in the cold salt water itself.

Here a most curious fact presents itself. Upon the

assurance of scientific men, we believe if steam be passed through a *dry* tube, passing through cold water, most of it will issue at the other end of the tube unchanged. If, on the other hand, a certain quantity of hot water, formed from former steam, remains in the tube, *bent* for the purpose of retaining it in the hollow, then all the steam will be condensed, and flow out in the state of water.

Thus the recovery of any quantity of used steam may be provided for without any necessity for admixture with salt water. It is only necessary to pass this used steam into a tube running a certain way through a body of cold water, and having a bend near the point of final escape containing a little hot water, and all the steam will reappear as hot water. The importance of this to marine steam-navigation is obviously incalculable: its advantages, in point of facility and simplicity, over other modes of accomplishing the same object, must be plain at the first glance to all who are in the least acquainted with the subject.

But it has to be considered that one advantage of the old mode of condensation is, that the used steam escapes into a vacuum, and consequently with much greater facility than it would even into a space filled with air, not to mention one filled with elastic steam.

The mode of producing this vacuum by the agency of the steam itself, and which we shall now attempt to describe, strikes us as being extremely interesting. Let us suppose a boiler generating and sending forth steam through a conducting tube into a cylinder. This steam will drive the piston along, until, finding a valve open, its own elasticity causes it to rush into the space left free to it beyond the valve. Here, in the old system, it was met, as before observed, by the cold-water 'dash,' and, as steam, destroyed; now, it will be allowed to escape into the bent tube above described, and will be propelled along this tube at the presumed rate of pressure—about thirty pounds to the inch. The effect of the cold water outside, and the hot water in the bend of the tube, will cause it to condense as we have said; but the vacuum into which the water may run has still to be provided.

To effect this object, the bent tube is connected with a closed vessel fitted with a valve at top opening upwards, and thus the first operation will be the filling the whole apparatus with steam at a certain pressure; but when the water condenses in the tube, for the reasons mentioned above, the supply of steam is cut off, the valve of the closed vessel will shut, and prevent the entrance of air, and thus a vacuum will be formed by the simplest and most natural means, and the flow of the condensed steam, in the form of water, into the vessel, will go on *in vacuo*. Thus, the same advantages will be secured in the new as under the old system, so far as the vacuum is concerned; but, in addition, the water thus recovered will be returned to the boiler, not only free from all impurity—as distilled fresh water, in fact—but also at a heat which will promote economy in fuel to a considerable extent.

It would be quite superfluous to insist upon advantages so obvious as these; and we have no doubt that the ascertained laws relating to them will allow of their being fully realised in the way proposed. The great desideratum, in the absence of any less complicated prime mover, is obviously some certain mode of preventing the waste of water—that is, of fresh water—in long sea-voyages. 'Hall's Condensers' had done much to meet the case; but a moment's reflection will enable the reader to see that, in the way now proposed, the object will be accomplished on the most advantageous and economical principle; and although the assertion may seem somewhat rash, in presence of ever-progressing improvements, it seems as if we had reached the point where nothing more can be desired, in this way the limit of perfection having been attained.

LOST IN THE MIST.

THE thin white snow-streaks pencilling
The mountain's shoulder gray,
While in the west the pale-green sky
Smiled back the dawning day,
Till from the misty east, the sun
Was of a sudden born

Like a new soul in paradise—
How long it seems since morn !

One little hour, O round red sun,
And thou and I shall come
Unto the golden gate of rest,
The open door of home ;
One little hour, O weary sun,
Delay the murky eve,
Till these tired feet that pleasant door
Enter, and never leave.

Ye rooks that wing in slender file
Into the thickening gloom,
Ye'll scarce have reached your old gray tower
Ere I have reached my home :
Plover, that thrill'st this lonely moor
With such an eerie cry,
Seek you your nest ere night falls down,
As my heart's nest seek I.

O light, light heart, O heavy feet,
Beat time a little while ;
Keep the warm love-light in these eyes,
And on these lips the smile.
Outspeed the mist, the gathering mist
That follows o'er the moor ;
The darker grows the world without,
The brighter shines that door.

O door, so close, yet so far off ;
Grim mist that nears and nears ;
Coward ! to faint in sight of home,
Blinded—but not with tears ;
'Tis but the mist, the cruel mist,
That chills this heart of mine,
My eyes that cannot see the light,
Not that it ceased to shine.

A little further—further yet ;
How the mist crawls and crawls !
It hems me round, it shuts me in
Its white sepulchral walls :
No earth, no sky, no path, no light ;
Silence as of a tomb :
Dear heaven, it is too soon to die—
And I was going home !

A little further—further yet :
My limbs are young ; my heart—
O heart, it is not only life
That is so hard to part :
Poor lips, slow freezing into calm,
Numbed hands, that nerveless fall ;
And a mile off, warm lips, safe hands,
Waiting to welcome all !

I see the pictures in the room,
The light forms moving round,
The very flicker of the fire
Upon the patterned ground ;
O that I were the shepherd dog
That guards their happy door !
Or even the silly household cat
That basks upon the floor.

O that I lay one minute's space
Where I have lain so long :
O that I heard one little word
Sweeter than angel's song !
A pause—and then the table fills,
The mirth brims o'er and o'er ;
While I—oh, can it be God's will ?
I die, outside the door.

My body fails, my quickened soul
Fights, desperate, ere it go ;
The blank air shrieks with voices wild,
But not the voice I know :
Dim shapes come beckoning through the dark ;
Ghost-touches thrill my hair ;
Faces, long strange, peer glimmering by,
But one face is not there.

Lost—lost ! and such a little way
From that dear sheltering door :
Lost, lost, out of the open arms
Left empty evermore :
His will be done. O gate of heaven,
Fairer than earthly door,
Receive me !—Everlasting Arms
Enfold me evermore !

And so, farewell. * * * *
No mortal hand
This, on my darkening eyes ?
My name too—which I thought to hear
Next time in Paradise ?
Warm arms—close lips—oh, saved, saved, saved !
Across the deathly moor
Sought, found ! and yonder through the night
Shineth the blessed door.

THE WEATHER OF 1857.

We are informed by the *Meteorological Report* from Wellington Road, Birmingham, that last year was remarkable throughout, with the exception of the month of April, for its high mean temperature. The excess was greatest in summer and autumn ; while in December the temperature was seven degrees above the average. The reporter attempts to account for the warmth being retained during the later months of the year by the comparative paucity of clear nights : 'It appears to me to be pretty clear that the moist state of the atmosphere, accompanied by a high barometric pressure, has had an influence in retaining a portion of this high temperature during the latter part of the year. Whenever the surface has been cooled down by night radiation under a clear evening sky, fog, and subsequently cloud, has almost invariably been the result, and thus the earth has been shielded from the cooling process. Indeed, I cannot call to mind many nights during the fall of the year which have been clear from sunset to sunrise.' While such was the state of the temperature, the quantity of rain that fell during the year was about an average ; it was more evenly distributed throughout the months than usual ; but September shewed the largest collection, and December the smallest.

'MANY THOUGHTS ON MANY THINGS.'

The book recently published with this title is a marvellously substantial quarto of 'selections from the writings of the known great and the great unknown,' by Henry Southgate (Routledge). It serves the purpose of a dictionary of quotations ; and being analytically arranged, is a readable book besides ; giving the opinions and fancies, in prose and verse, of numerous authors, ancient and modern, on each subject referred to. The motto on the title-page, from Coleridge, may be cited as a specimen of the work itself, as well as an apology for its publication : 'Why are not more gems from our great authors scattered over the country ? Great books are not in everybody's reach ; and though it is better to know them thoroughly than to know them only here and there, yet it is a good work to give a little to those who have neither time nor means to get more. Let every bookworm, when in any fragrant, scarce old tome he discovers a sentence, a story, an illustration, that does his heart good, hasten to give it.'

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